

SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT PRESS STATEMENT

MC.MAY.37/64 (HEALTH)

TEXT OF SPEECH BY THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH, MR. YONG NYUK LIN, AT A FAREWELL DINNER IN HONOUR OF MR. C.V. DEVAN NAIR, AS RETIRING CHAIRMAN OF THE ADULT EDUCATION BOARD, AT THE RAFFLES INSTITUTION ON SATURDAY, MAY 16, AT 9 P.M.

I should like, first of all, to thank the Organising Committee of this auspicious occasion for inviting my wife and I to be associated with such a large distinguished gathering of Adult Education workers of Singapore in order to do honour to a great educationist, namely, my good friend and colleague - Mr. C.V. Devan Nair. Although Devan Nair is not a big, tall strapping man, yet no one can deny that in that sturdily built frame of his, resides a power-house of terrific punch like a nuclear power station.

Those of us who have the good fortune to work closely with him have greatly admired his endearing qualities - a powerful brain, high integrity and a great courageous heart to stoutly defend what he considers to be right against any adversary. I speak with some knowledge of Devan because for some months he acted as my Political Secretary in the Ministry of Education. When he resigned to go back to teach in his old school, it was generally felt that he and I must have disagreed violently on some educational policy - but it is not like Devan to withdraw ingloriously without a fight, so something else must have beckoned to him. The bitter truth was that he was tired of a desk job and wanted action.

This came when we enticed him to take over the chairmanship of the Adult Education Board and after a hectic three years, he has brought our Adult Education movement to its highest watermark of over 1,400 classes and an enrolment of 40,000 ranging from Literacy, Further Education and Secondary classes to various popular courses like Photography and Flower Arrangement. Tonight, we honour Devan for his great achievements as a leader in our Adult Education movement. Tonight is in honour of his retirement as Chairman of the Board. Tonight, we give him a great hand in recognition of his great work for our community.

But is retirement a right word for Devan. No, his inexhaustible spirit called for yet harder work and action. Even whilst he badgered at Adult Education he threw his heart and soul into another great movement, yet another of his earlier loves. (Besides Mrs. Devan Nair, of course) and that is, the trade union movement. So even long before he had thoughts of retiring from the Adult Education movement, he had already taken on another great responsibility, to build up our National Trade Union Congress of which he is its most popular Secretary-General.

As if this is not enough, Devan who was born in Malacca has been fighting his way through in Singapore in education and in the trade unions, recently fought his way through an election to become an M.P. of the largest constituency in Malaysia, namely, in Bungsar, Kuala Lumpur, capital city of Malaysia!

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What is the secret of his magic touch and success? All would like to know. I think I have it. It is his first love, Mrs. Devan Nair. It is a true saying that behind a great and successful man stands a woman. Look at both of them - a perfect pair of harmony, happiness and serenity, like a contented pair of lovebirds perching on the branch of a tree. With peace and harmony at home, no wonder young Devan goes out for excitement and scraps and returns home for comfort and succour. After he has been refreshed and strengthened out he sallies forth again into yet more battles. And so it goes on.

Now that Mrs. Devan Nair is an Assemblywoman in her own right, well, it is time for Devan to do the comforting and consoling now and again. The change would do him good, I'm sure.

So, in conclusion, I say let us all drink to the health and happiness of both Mr. and Mrs. Devan Nair and wish both of them continued good health in order that our people in Malaysia will benefit through their outstanding leadership and guidance.

MAY 16, 1964.

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